

77/
178 older Confucian view of religions, reinforced by nationalist feeling, reasserted itself; consciously or unconsciously they reverted to the view that no strong self-respecting government should tolerate independent religious bodies that challenged the government's right to control all aspects of public and private life.

Religions in the twentieth century were caught in this crossfire of negative sentiment and attack. To modernize and to become militant was to provoke state suppression, and the effort of religious leaders to stem the rising tide of intellectual materialism failed.³ In the countryside the old folk religions -- varieties of Buddhism and Taoism -- continued to wither away. Christianity made some advances, but it was always tainted by its foreignness, by the fact that its missionaries came with the backing of Western powers which held China in thrall.

77/
798 Communist policy towards religion is in many ways the culmination of the trends we have described. It reflects the triumph of materialist philosophy and the imposition of materialism as the intellectual orthodoxy. It is highly nationalistic and anti-foreign and thus insists that all religious organizations cease receiving support from abroad and assert their distinctive Chinese character. It carries forward, through the most effective apparatus of control and coercion that China has seen, the confiscation of church property

3. O. Briere, op. cit., passim.

771 and the secularization of the clergy. The Com-
798 munist Constitution provides that "Citizens of
the People's Republic of China have freedom of
religious belief."⁴ This means, in practice,
that people of various religious persuasions are
allowed a limited and shrinking area of belief and
action by an authoritarian government which
reserves the fundamental right to control all
education, communication, and public and private
morality. On the grounds of anti-superstition,
anti-imperialism, and anti-feudalism, the govern-
ment and Party move steadily, with only occasional
tactical retreats, towards the liquidation of
religion in China.

Both pre-Communist trends and Commu-
nist policies should be kept in mind as we consi-
der religion in the North China Region.

II. BUDDHISM

779 This oldest of imported religions shows, in
798 its recent development, some of the trends just
noted. Despite the efforts of the noted abbot
T'ai Hsü (1889-1946), Buddhism never competed
successfully for the allegiance of the intellectuals.
The effort to transform it into a modern religion,
by updating both its doctrine and its social pro-
gram, failed, although for a time it seemed to
show signs of an increasing vitality. Under
warlord and nationalist governments its person-
nel and establishments suffered severe attrition.

779 Its establishments were taxed, its temples were
798 converted to secular use by warlords, Kuomin-
tang officials, and the local gentry. Much
Buddhist property was confiscated, and tenants
on Buddhist land refused to pay their rent.
Monks and nuns were driven from their
temples in the cities where up to 80 per cent of
Buddhist establishments were converted to use
as schools barracks, and police stations.⁵

The Japanese attempt to use Buddhism as
an ideology to bind together their puppet regimes
in China and Southeast Asia generated widespread
anti-Buddhist sentiment throughout Free and
Occupied China.

The older clergy of monks and nuns was
accused of being corrupt and parasitic by
modern Buddhists, but efforts at sweeping
fundamental reform failed; the motivation for
becoming a member of such a clergy remained

5. Cf. Wing-tsit Chan, Religious Trends in
Modern China, New York, 1953, pp. 55-56. This
summary is from Ta-hsing, "Fifteen Years of
Religious Catastrophes in Retrospect," Hai-ch'ao-
yin Magazine, Vol. XVI, No. 1, Jan. 1935.

779 largely negative.⁶ Thus gradual extinction of
798 the Buddhist order seemed only a matter of time.
But as late as 1930, the Buddhist clergy and es-
tablishments in the North China Region were
still numerous.⁷

6. Chan, Religious Trends in Modern China, pp. 81-82, citing Reichelt, Truth and Tradition in Chinese Buddhism, pp. 231-34, lists reasons given by Chinese nuns for entering holy orders. Unhappy marriages account for a great number, and 60 to 70 per cent made the choice because no other solution presented itself. Other reasons for entering holy orders include: genuine and deep faith; presented to the church by parents because of devotion, sickness, lack of support, or an astrologer's advice; sense of helplessness after husband's death; poverty, family troubles or other disappointments; influence of sisters, et al, who had become nuns; and servants seeking escape from the cruelty of their mistresses.

7. Shen-pao Nien-chien [Shen-pao Year-book], 1933, p. T2.

779 ●798	<u>Provinces and major cities</u>	<u>Buddhist Clergy</u>	<u>Temples, Monasteries, Nunneries</u>
	Hopei	2, 100	1, 170
	Shansi	16, 640	5, 042
	Peking	1, 490	810

It has not been possible to trace the decline from 1930 onward, but the pressures of war and invasion added to those noted above probably contributed to a sharp reduction of both clergy and establishments in this area. Communist measures have probably eliminated most of what remained. Buddhist establishments in China as a whole appear to have declined in number from 268, 494 in 1930,⁸ to about 130, 000 in 1947⁹ to less than 100 in 1954.¹⁰ Estimates¹¹ on the total number of clergy vary, but in 1931 they appear to have numbered 500, 000 to 600, 000.

8. Ibid. Basis of figures is data collected by the China Buddhist Association.

9. Communist Atrocities and Persecutions of Buddhism on the China Mainland, (a four-page pamphlet), Buddhist Association of China, Taiwan, 1954; hereinafter cited as Atrocities.

10. Ibid.

11. Chan, op. cit., pp. 80-81.

779 Refugees in 1949-50 reported that four out of
798 every seven clerics had been forced to return to
lay life.¹² By 1954, it has been estimated,
there were only 2,500 clergy remaining in the
whole of China, "of which half are Chinese
Communist Party agents."¹³ Even allowing
for exaggeration, it would appear that the
Buddhist clergy as a group has been nearly
eliminated and that its influence in society has
reached the vanishing point.

779 While the traditional clergy was in
decline, Buddhist laymen assisted by a few
monks attempted the ^rinvigoration of the Chinese
Buddhist community. The leadership of this
movement was largely from the East China Re-
gion. Moder^r-minded Buddhists felt that a
lesson could be learned from Protestantism in
the West: that an entrenched clergy could not be
the instrument of sweeping reform. Hence their
efforts were concentrated on building lay or-
ganizations of various kinds: social welfare or-
ganizations such^{as} the Red Swastika Society
(modeled on the Red Cross), YMBA and YWBA
patterned on the YMCA and YWCA, Buddhist
schools and seminaries to train a modern clergy,
and research centers for the re-evaluation of
the Buddhist heritage. They attempted to reach
out and join hands with Buddhists in other
Asiatic countries, and good-will tours and
conferences were organized. Buddhist writing

12. Ibid., op. cit., pp. 90-91.

13. Artocities.

779 have, on the one hand, made it possible for the youth of Chinese Catholic families to have a complete modern education under Church auspices and control; on the other, the colleges and the universities, notably Fu-jen University in Peking, and Aurora University in Shanghai, have given the clergy a chance to win over non-Catholic youth enrolled as students. Catholic scientific and cultural research, such as that carried on at the famous Sikawei Observatory near Shanghai, make it clear that the Church and modern science are not in direct opposition to one another.

779 The situation in 1945-46 was encouraging
• 798 to Chinese and foreign Catholics. The clergy was being rapidly Sinicized, charitable work was going forward, Catholic educational institutions were full. Native and foreign clergy had gained approval for their work in the war of resistance against Japan. At the same time there were developments which, especially in the light of later events, promised trouble to the Church. The exchange of envoys between the Vatican and the Nationalist Government took place in 1946; Bishop Paul Yu Pin was widely believed to have strong influence with Generalissimo Chiang; these and other signs of identification of the Church with the Nationalist Government boded ill for the Church when the government declined

779 in power. As the Communist power increased,
798 the persecution of the Church, begun in Communist areas in 1937, was a grim warning of what might be in store for Chinese Catholicism as a whole.⁶¹ Catholic Action, the association of enthusiastic laymen for the advancement of the Faith, had been growing in all parts of the country from 1928 onward; there were 200 groups and thirty youth groups as early as 1930.⁶² In 1948 the Papal Nuncio ordered the formation of the Legion of Mary, a more militant, zealous, and disciplined organization of Catholic laymen, which in many areas absorbed the Catholic Action groups. The new organization was set up by an American priest, and it had the Chinese name of Sheng-mu chün. Many experienced Catholic missionaries were doubtful if any strong Chinese government would tolerate this type of militant organization. The group has proved of major propaganda value to the Communists and an object of their most ruthless measures of oppression.⁶³

Communist policies and propaganda have made the most of all the vulnerabilities of the Chinese Catholic Church. Its foreign "imperialist" and Kuomintang connections were played up, and nationalistic feelings against it

61. Cf. Raymonde de Jaegher and I. Corbally Kuhn, Tempete sur la Chine, Paris, 1953,

62. Monsterleet, p. 148.

63. Hsü, Hsin Chung-kuo Ti Tsung-chiao Ko-hsin Yün-tung [The Movement for Religious Reformation in New China], Shanghai, 1951, pp. 9-13.

779 were aroused. Its role as property owner --
• 798 "foreign capitalist-imperialist oppression" --
was dramatized during the land reform period,
and local ignorance and hatred turned against it.⁶⁴
Old and long-discredited accusations were made
against Catholic charitable organizations: the
Sacred Heart Home for Children in Nanking was
labeled a "little Buchenwald" and the sisters
were accused of torturing, neglecting, and sell-
ing Chinese children.⁶⁵ The war in Korea
provided the occasion for an increasing number
of accusations of espionage against Catholic
clergy.

Communist government measures have been many, but the main steps resemble those taken against other religious groups. The 1950 campaign for "triple independence" or "triple autonomy" involved freedom from foreign administration, financing, and evangelistic policy control. This was given emotional significance by the warfare in Korea, with the Communists' well-managed propaganda campaigns against imperialism and espionage.⁶⁶

64. Cf. the dramatic eyewitness account of F. Legrand, Le communisme arrive au village Chinois, Peking, 1947. This observation was made before the nationwide land reform campaign.

65. Cf. Walker, China Under Communism, p. 190. Such accusations recall the stories circulated by the gentry which touched off the Tientsin massacre of Chinese Catholics and foreigners in 1870.

66. Monsterleet, pp. 25-29.

779 In 1951 the campaign against the Church
• 798 was accelerated. All Catholic schools and
universities and many hospitals and churches
were confiscated. Priests were "tried and im-
prisoned, and the Papal Nuncio was expelled
from China.⁶⁷

The next step in the campaign against Catholicism resembled the policy followed in Russia and in the East European satellites. This was the foundation by the Communists of a "national church" whose guiding spirits were a small minority of disaffected clergy and laymen. This group was constituted as the "Committee of the Reform Church." It was not subject to episcopal or pontifical directives. The group was to decide what was to be taught, who could say mass or give the sacraments; and it advocated "progressive," i.e., orthodox Communist teaching. Under its sponsorship certain "model parishes" were set up with "progressive" priests in charge. Apparently this organization has had only limited success. Monsterleet estimates that only 2 per cent of the clergy went over to the "reformed Church"; nearly all openly proclaimed their faith; some died as martyrs.⁶⁸

From October 1952 -- the time of the "Peace Congress" in Peking -- there was less

67. Ibid., p. 28.

68. Monsterleet, p. 29. It should be emphasized that these figures are given by a Catholic author.

779 persecution of Catholics, although between Jan.
798 1951 and November 1953 the number of mission-
aries was reduced through expulsion from 3, 222
to 364.⁶⁹

779 By far the highest concentration of Catholic
clergy in the North China Region has been Peking.
Peking, like Shanghai, had over 200 priests; the
entire province of Fukien had only 177.⁷⁰ The
following table indicates the distribution of Catho-
lics and Catholic centers in North China.⁷¹

69. Mission Bulletin, April 1952, p. 323,
and Jan. 1954, p. 56; cited in Walker, op. cit.,
p. 189.

70. Monsterleet, p. 33.

71. Cf. Monsterleet, pp. 16-17, for distri-
bution of Catholic centers. The figures are from
Annuaire des missions Catholiques de Chine 1939,
Shanghai, 1939.

779 Peking has been for many centuries the
798 center of Catholicism in North China. Unfortunately we have little detailed information on the Communists' moves against the Catholics in Peking. The general course of events in the north followed the nationwide pattern outlined above. The Communists' campaign in 1950 for the "three autonomies" and for a "reformed church" met with disciplined Catholic resistance, although there were some defectors.⁷² The Legion of Mary was dissolved by the government in Tientsin on July 13, 1951, and the dissolution was then carried out throughout the country. The Fu-jen Catholic University of Peking was confiscated in October 1950, and the Jesuit Tsinkou (Chin-ku) University in Tientsin was taken over in July 1951. In September 1951, the Communists assumed control of all Catholic primary schools (4,000 throughout the country), seminaries, hospitals, and orphanages.⁷³ Imprisonment, torture, and expulsion of foreign clergy proceeded steadily throughout these years. In late 1952 the persecution was eased.

While many missionaries predict that under sustained persecution the Church hierarchy and organization will disappear in China, some expect that Catholics will find clandestine ways to preserve their faith. One former superior of a mission in Hopei predicts that in North China,

72. Monsterleet, pp. 86-102, passim.

73. Monsterleet, pp. 134-5, 149.

779 where Catholicism is deeply rooted and served
798 by a larger native clergy, it will find means of
survival. He points to the numerous all-Catholic
villages and believes that Catholics will have a
better chance to preserve their faith in the
countryside where, he thinks, the influence of the
Communist dominated schools may be less strong
than in the cities. 74

Yet the spreading network of state and party
— organizations, the cadres in every village and
hamlet in China, means that Catholics every-
where will face further trials. How can the
Church resist a totalitarian state and gain con-
verts when conversion brings political and social
sanctions against them? Father Greene, who
witnessed the persecution in Kwangai, sounds a
sombre note of warning. He is speaking of the
cadres.

"It was impossible for me, as I watched
these well-trained youths perform their
inhuman tasks, to minimize the serious-
ness of their convictions and the thorough-
ness of their methods. These convictions
were deeply impressed on their minds...
The new ideas and strange thoughts are
unconditionally accepted by the young, and
accepted with a fanaticism which fears
neither suffering, hardship nor death. I
saw shy youths changed into courageous

74. Monsterleet, p. 214. The commen-
tator is not named.

779
• 798 apostles; I saw the ambitious and selfish give up their goals and possessions; I saw some of my Christian youths break the bonds of family and friendship for this Cause."⁷⁵

The basic question is whether the harassed and persecuted Church can find the means to give its own youth these qualities. If it can not, its future throughout China is dark indeed.

VI. PROTESTANTISM

779
797 In many respects the Protestant missionaries and their converts set the pattern for the modernizing movements which took place in Buddhism and Islam. Protestant religious work in the twentieth century came to be accompanied by wide-spread, diverse, and large-scale social service, medical, and educational activities. The Protestant missionaries helped to awaken the social conscience of the Chinese, and the missions were major centers for the dissemination of general knowledge about the West. Sun Yat-sen was a devout Christian, and Christian thought left its mark on much of his work. As pioneers in medical education, in many fields of technical education, in women's education, and in many other spheres, the Protestants made striking contributions to the dissolution of the traditional order in China. But it was beyond their powers to replace that order with a Christ-

75. Robert W. Greene, Calvary in China, New York, 1953, pp. 76-77.